

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM**

NR Eligible: yes ☐
no ☐

Property Name: McLean Property Inventory Number: BA-3144
Address: 4920 Ridge Road Historic district: ☐ yes ☒ no
City: Baltimore Zip Code: 21237 County: Baltimore County
USGS Quadrangle(s): Middle River
Property Owner: Robert M. and Barbara J. McLean Tax Account ID Number: 1413013240
Tax Map Parcel Number(s): 397 Tax Map Number: 82
Project: Section 100: I-95, I-895(N) Split to North of MD 43 Agency: Maryland Transportation Authority
Agency Prepared By: A.D. Marble & Company
Preparer's Name: Stephanie Foell Date Prepared: 8/4/2004
Documentation is presented in: See Key References List
Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: ☐ Eligibility recommended ☒ Eligibility not recommended
Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G
Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:
Name of the District/Property: _____
Inventory Number: _____ Eligible: ☐ yes ☐ no Listed: ☐ yes ☐ no
Site visit by MHT Staff ☐ yes ☒ no Name: _____ Date: _____

Description of Property and Justification: *(Please attach map and photo)*

Architectural Description

The residence at 4920 Ridge is an eclectic conglomeration of Victorian-era architectural elements. The building is two stories in height with a three-story turret and hipped-roof dormers. The symmetrical front (west) façade is bisected by the round turret which extends past the main, hipped roofline. The entrance is located on the turret, which also contains one-over-one, double-hung windows. The main portion of the house features two-over-two, double-hung sash windows which are flanked by louvered shutters on all elevations. A full-front, hipped-roof porch is supported by slender, turned posts which are topped with ornamental braces.

A gable ell extends to the rear (east) of the building, forming a T-shaped footprint. The building is clad in vinyl siding which is laid horizontally on the main portion of the house, but runs vertically on the turret. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles, and the conical roof of the turret is topped with a metal spire. Two brick chimneys are located on the ridgeline of the gable ell.

The grounds of 4920 Ridge is devoid of landscaping with the exception of several young saplings.

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MHT Comments:

Traci J. [Signature]
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

[Signature]
Reviewer, National Register Program

8/24/04
Date

9/16/04
Date

200401247

History/Significance

General Regional History

The residence at 4920 Ridge Road is located in northeastern Baltimore County in the White Marsh neighborhood, which derives its name from the marshland which is located in this area of the county. The area also was known as Nottingham, named for the Nottingham Iron Works, an industry which dominated this portion of the county.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, much of the area developed as a result of its proximity to Philadelphia Road, a major thoroughfare within the region. From the early years of settlement into the twentieth century, much of the land of this portion of Baltimore County was involved in small-scale farming. After World War II, the growing suburbanization of the Baltimore region reached White Marsh and much of the farmland was subdivided into smaller lots. Many post-War neighborhoods containing small residences are concentrated in this part of Baltimore County.

Philadelphia Road

The area of Baltimore County that is now White Marsh developed largely as a result of its proximity to Philadelphia Road/Maryland Route 7, a road that originated as a Native American trail (Brooks and Rockel 1979:134). In 1729, the City of Baltimore was platted as a future port and commerce center. During that time, surveyors laid out the Philadelphia Road, linking Philadelphia, the New World's largest port city, with points south and west, including Baltimore.

The roadway's importance grew over time as interstate commerce became more prevalent. By the 1740s, commercial thoroughfares were being constructed to move farm produce, mill products, lime, and iron castings to the port city of Baltimore, and taverns and hotels sprang up along the Philadelphia Road. After several attempts to establish a turnpike the Baltimore and Havre de Grace Turnpike Company received a charter to construct a toll road on the bed of the Philadelphia Road in 1814. The turnpike company initially enjoyed a period of prosperity. However, after only 20 years, railroads began offering intense competition (Hollifield 1978:81-82).

As Baltimore continued its expansion eastward, portions of the turnpike were ceded to the city. In 1888, Harford County assumed control of the turnpike contained within its boundaries. The end of the turnpike came in 1894, when Baltimore County assumed control of the remaining roadway within its jurisdiction.

During the twentieth century, traffic continued to increase on Philadelphia Road, particularly when automobiles became prevalent. Businesses arose along the former turnpike to serve the traveling public and many thought the road would continue to be the favored route for those traveling between Philadelphia and points south. However, in the late 1930s, the state held discussions regarding Works Progress Administration funds available for highway construction. A decision was made either to improve the existing Philadelphia Road, by then designated as Maryland Route 7, or construct a new roadway parallel to the old one. The businesses along the existing route fought to retain their source of business, but constructing a new, parallel road became the final decision, and work commenced on the new road, the Pulaski Highway, which eventually replaced Philadelphia Road as the primary thoroughfare through the area.

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Agricultural and Industrial Development in Northeastern Baltimore County

European settlement of northeastern Baltimore County likely began circa 1660. Because of the costly and complex land grant process, many wealthy landowners purchased parcels of land in Baltimore County, viewing these holdings as either investments in the future or potential bequests for heirs. Even land that had been purchased remained vacant (Marks 2000:7).

Consequently, during the early eighteenth century, land patterns consisted of small settlements, trails, and wilderness. Small-scale farmers, woodcutters, and miners were the primary residents, not the structured society of the southern Maryland gentry. This trend continued into later centuries as farmers continued to cultivate smaller plots of land than their Southern, plantation-owning counterparts (Marks 2000:11).

The Nottingham Company operated several iron furnaces in this area of Baltimore County, and collectively the business was referred to as the Nottingham Iron Works. Established in 1745 by Alexander Lawson, the company was named after investor James Russell's estate in Prince George's County, Maryland. Although the Nottingham Iron Works enjoyed several decades of prosperity, its holdings were seized after the Revolutionary War because of Lawson's strong ties to Great Britain. At this time, the company was subdivided among multiple landowners, although the Nottingham Forge remained productive until the late nineteenth century. The furnace, however, ceased production, although the actual date of cessation is somewhat in dispute as is the exact location of the ruins. Some early residents of Baltimore County may have been lured to the area because the iron works promised employment (Marks 2000:20-22).

By the mid-nineteenth century, many landowning residents of northeastern Baltimore County were German, Polish, or Irish immigrants. Other residents were tenant farmers who occupied land held by the descendants of the original landholders. Generally, farms were small in size and produced relatively minor amounts of what were known as "stoop crops," vegetables which required bending over to harvest. These included carrots, parsnips, beans, etc. These crops were either sold at markets throughout Baltimore City (usually the Belair Market, the closest to the area) or by the farmers themselves, a practice known as truck farming which was prevalent throughout the area. Also at this time, as greenhouses came into widespread use, this area of Baltimore County became an important center for the production of year-round cut flowers for weddings, funerals, and bouquets (McGrain 1990:17).

The American Foursquare

Residences—often simple I-house or American Foursquare forms—were commonly constructed as the farmhouses or tenant-farmer residences for many small-scale farms throughout Maryland. American Foursquares were also an early suburban house form. They were popular from 1900-1920.

Essentially a subtype of the Prairie style of building, American Foursquares commonly have hipped or pyramidal roofs, and are symmetrical, although entrances, which are located on the front façades, may be off center. This was one of the earliest forms of Prairie-style architecture and was the most common vernacular version. Vernacular examples often feature hipped dormers and single-story, full-width porches (McAlester and McAlester 1984:439).

The Queen Anne Style

The Queen Anne style of architecture was constructed primarily between 1880-1910. Prominent characteristics of the style include steeply pitched, complex roofs, and an asymmetrical façade. Wall surfaces are heavily ornamented with projecting bays, turrets or towers, and patterned shingles and half-timbering. The expanding railroad network allowed for the easy delivery of pre-cut

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architectural details that were integral to the style, spreading the popularity of Queen Anne architecture throughout the United States. The prominence of the style can also be attributed to its presence in numerous pattern books and periodicals during the end of the nineteenth century (McAlester and McAlester 1984:263-268).

Determination of Eligibility

In Baltimore County, residences such as 4920 Ridge Road were often the homes of prominent and successful farmers or landowners, or the country homes of city dwellers. The residence at 4920 Ridge was constructed in 1903. It is a vernacular interpretation of the Queen Anne style of Victorian-era architecture, and is not a particularly successful example. It lacks the asymmetrical massing integral to the style, and any previous variations in wall texture have been obscured by the application of siding.

Based on comments from the Maryland Historical Trust, an investigation into the origins of the house was undertaken to determine if the house is an example of a late Victorian-era pattern book house. Exhaustive deed and census research did not yield any insight into the construction of the house, and no building permit was issued for the residence, which is not unusual for what would have been a rural area in 1903.

A.D. Marble & Company staff undertook an intensive review of pattern books printed prior to 1903. Prominent contemporary periodicals that espoused pattern-book designs were also reviewed. Also, in an effort to be as thorough as possible, sources for mail-order and kit houses were also researched. Please see the bibliography for a complete list of works consulted.

No residences that appear to be of the same form as that of 4920 Ridge Road were identified. In all cases, residences that featured a turret were asymmetrical examples of the Queen Anne style. In general, most of the Queen Anne residences were substantially larger and more complex than the residence at 4920 Ridge Road. Turrets were most often located in the corners of buildings, and remaining portions of the buildings demonstrated the complex, asymmetrical massing that characterizes the style. Architectural details included decorative shingles, dentils, porches, and stained-glass windows. There was no evidence of symmetrical American Foursquares with superimposed central turrets as a common or prevalent building form.

Staff consulted with John McGrain, Baltimore County historian, on the origins of 4920 Ridge Road and also on the general presence of pattern-book residences within Baltimore County. Mr. McGrain stated that he knew of no pattern-book houses within Baltimore County and only one possible example in Baltimore City. He went on to say that several houses in Baltimore County appear as if they could be from pattern books, but after extensive research, he has found that they are likely only inspired by ideas promulgated in the books and not intended to replicate the actual designs.

Finally, staff did not receive a response for a request for any information on the design and/or construction of the house that the homeowners may have.

Although it is possible that some of the architectural details such as shingles and stained-glass windows were covered or removed as part of subsequent changes to the residence, it seems unlikely that this particular symmetrical form with a turret originated as a pattern-book house. Many other scenarios could explain this architectural anomaly. It is possible that the turret was superimposed on a pre-existing American Foursquare form, or that the design is the result of the owner's whimsy, merging two popular styles of the period.

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The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. that are associated with the lives of significant persons in or past; or
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. that have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

The residence at 4920 Ridge is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. It is not associated with any events that impacted American history which would make it eligible under Criterion A. Under Criterion B, it is not associated with any significant people.

It is also not eligible under Criterion C as an example of architecture that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. It is neither a significant example of an American Foursquare, nor a significant example of the Queen Anne style. Extensive research has not yielded any information indicating that the building is derived from an architectural pattern book or design featured in a contemporary architectural periodical.

Although the residence at 4920 Ridge Road is an unusual building form, it has been extensively altered by the application of siding and changes in the original fenestration which greatly obscure its architectural integrity. Within Baltimore County and nearby areas of Baltimore City, there are numerous examples of eclectic Victorian-era architecture that retain high degrees of integrity. The property was not evaluated for significance under Criterion D.

Key References

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Sidney, James C.

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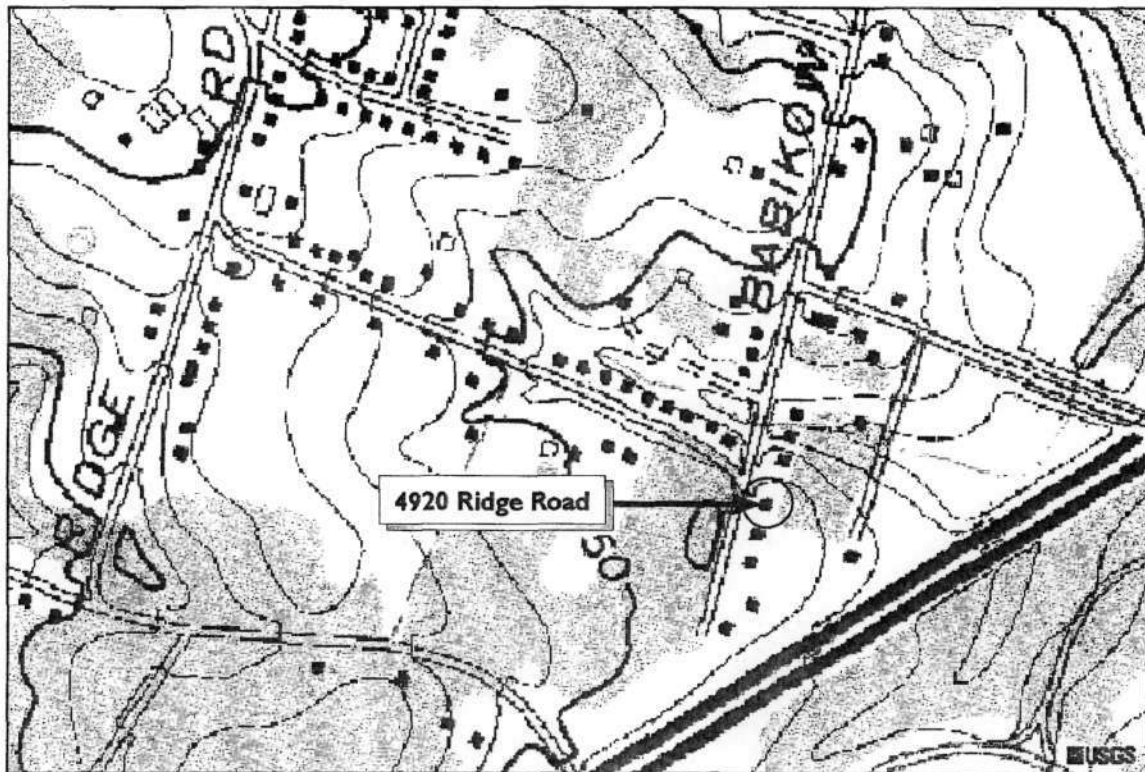
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Resource Location Map
Section 100: I-95, I-895 (N) Split to North of MD 43
Baltimore County, Maryland



Map Source: USGS Topographic Quadrangle: Middle River, MD

